

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 USSS-00
OC-06 CCO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 USIE-00 PRS-01 TRSE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01
SP-02 INRE-00 /066 W
-----261253Z 050806 /20
O 261150Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6971

C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0126

FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT'S PARTY

EUR FOR HUGHES
EUR/NE FOR DONCHI

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (MONDALE, WALTER F.)
SUBJECT: VISIT OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE TO ICELAND

REF: A) REYKJAVIK 114; B) REYKJAVIK 0125

1. FOLLOWING IS SETTING FOR VICE PRESIDENT'S AIRPORT
MEETING JANUARY 29 WITH PRIME MINISTER GEIR HALLGRIMSSON
AND BACKGROUND OF TACK PRIME MINISTER IS EXPECTED TO TAKE.

2. VICE PRESIDENT'S WILLINGNESS TO MEET WITH ICELANDIC
OFFICIALS DURING STOPOVER HAS BEEN WARMLY WELCOMED. IT
IS SEEN AS COURTEOUS GESTURE TOWARD SMALL NATO ALLY, ONE
THAT HAS NO MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS OWN AND THAT
DEPENDS FOR ITS SECURITY ON US-MANNED ICELAND DEFENSE
FORCE AT THE KEFLAVIK NATO BASE AND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
WHERE VICE PRESIDENT WILL BE LANDING. FACT THAT VISIT
OCCURS AT BEGINNING OF NEW ADMINISTRATION WILL BE
PARTICULARLY GRATIFYING TO PRIME MINISTER SINCE IT
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AFFORDS OPPORTUNITY FOR TOP LEVEL CONTACT WITH NEW U.S.
LEADERSHIP. FINALLY, VICE PRESIDENT'S NORWEGIAN ANCESTRY
OF WHICH ICELANDERS ARE AWARE WILL GIVE THEM PERSONAL
SENSE OF IDENTIFICATION WITH HIM BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN
ORIGIN.

3. RELATIONS BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND ICELAND ARE

CURRENTLY VERY GOOD, AND WE HAVE BEEN TOLD PRIME MINISTER WILL ASSURE VICE PRESIDENT THERE ARE NO OUTSTANDING BILATERAL PROBLEMS BETWEEN US. RELATIONS WERE STRAINED DURING MOST RECENT COD WAR WITH UK WHEN WIDESPREAD RESENTMENT HERE OVER ALLEGED FAILURE OF NATO AND US TO COME TO ICELAND'S AID PRODUCED STRONG PRESSURE FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ICELAND FROM NATO AND REMOVAL OF AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE. WHILE THESE POLITICAL PRESSURES HAVE SUBSIDED FOLLOWING RESOLUTION OF FISHERIES DISPUTE, SUPPORT FOR ICELAND'S NATO MEMBERSHIP AND OUR MILITARY PRESENCE WAS VISIBLY ERODED. IN PARTICULAR, WE HAVE NOTICED INCREASE IN SKEPTICISM AMONG ICELANDERS OVER VALUE OF IDF AND NATO IN SAFEGUARDING ICELAND'S VITAL INTERESTS. THESE SENTIMENTS, WHICH OVERLOOK FACT THAT COD WAR WAS BILATERAL DISPUTE BETWEEN NATO PARTNERS FALLING OUTSIDE DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS OF TREATY, COULD BE AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT FACTOR AS THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR 1978 DRAW NEAR. THEY ARE SENTIMENTS WHICH HARD-LINE LEFTIST OPPOSITION TO NATO BASE (PEOPLES ALLIANCE) WILL FULLY EXPLOIT. IT IS IN THIS DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONTEXT THAT PRIME MINISTER MAY BE EXPECTED TO DISCUSS IN BROAD TERMS IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO PROGRESS IN U.S.-ICELANDIC COOPERATION UNDER 1974 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU).

4. PRIME MINISTER WILL ALSO BE MINDFUL THAT AS RESULT OF 1975-76 COD WAR IT IS NOW RESPECTABLE FOR ICELANDERS TO QUESTION THE GENERATION-OLD PREMISE THAT THE SECURITY GUARANTEE AFFORDED BY NATO MEMBERSHIP AND IDF PRESENCE CONSTITUTED AMPLE COMPENSATION FOR CONTRIBUTION THAT ICELAND

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MADE TO WESTERN DEFENSE. THERE HAVE BEEN INSISTENT DEMANDS FROM SEVERAL QUARTERS FOR MORE TANGIBLE, MATERIAL BENEFITS. PARADOXICALLY, SOME ICELANDERS FEAR THAT ICELAND'S ACCEPTANCE OF U.S. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, E.G., IN CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CIVILIAN AIRPORT TERMINAL AT KEFLAVIK, WOULD JEOPARDIZE ICELANDERS'S NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND CULTURE BY MAKING U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE PERMANENT.

5. PRESENT GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS BASICALLY FRIENDLY TO U.S., AND PRIME MINISTER, WHO STRONGLY SUPPORTS NATO MEMBERSHIP, THEREFORE HAVE TRICKY COURSE TO FOLLOW IN ACCOMMODATING PRESSURES FROM QUITE DIFFERENT DOMESTIC QUARTERS. PRIME MINISTER MUST EVEN CONTEND WITHIN HIS OWN INDEPENDENCE PARTY AND WITH THOSE AMONG HIS COALITION PARTNERS, THE PROGRESSIVES, WHO ARGUE BASED ON COD WAR EXPERIENCE THAT ICELAND SHOULD WORK TOWARD PHASED WITHDRAWAL OF DEFENSE FORCE WHILE PRESERVING NATO MEMBERSHIP.

6. ALTHOUGH HE TOLD ME AT FOREIGN MINISTER'S DINNER FOR
PRESIDENT JANUARY 21 THAT HE WILL NOT ENGAGE VICE
PRESIDENT IN DETAILS OF ICELAND'S EXPECTATIONS OF U.S.,
OPPORTUNITY FOR PRIME MINISTER MAY BE TOO GOOD FOR HIM TO MISS.
IF HE DOES GO INTO SPECIFICS, I BELIEVE HE WILL BE SATISFIED BY
AN EXPRESSION OF VICE PRESIDENT'S INTEREST IN HAVING RECEIVED
HIS VIEWS PERSONALLY AND BY SUGGESTION THAT HIS
GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ME AND THE
DEPARTMENT ON THESE MATTERS. MEETING WILL, OF COURSE,
AFFORD VICE PRESIDENT OPPORTUNITY TO REITERATE THAT
U.S. VALUES ICELAND'S FRIENDSHIP AND LOOKS FORWARD TO
CONTINUED COOPERATION WITH IT AS A PARTNER IN THE COMMON
DEFENSE. ANYTHING VICE PRESIDENT MAY WISH TO CONVEY RE
HIS PRESENT GLOBAL MISSION WILL ALSO BE APPRECIATED.
FINALLY, IF VICE PRESIDENT WERE TO CONVEY PRESIDENT'S
BEST WISHES ALONG WITH HIS OWN TO PRIME MINISTER I AM
SURE LATTER WOULD BE PLEASED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 26-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977REYKJA00126
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770028-0407
Format: TEL
From: REYKJAVIK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770116/aaaaanxs.tel
Line Count: 140
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7d2308d1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 REYKJAVIK 114, 77 REYKJAVIK 125
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3495749
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE TO ICELAND
TAGS: OVIP, (MONDALE, WALTER F)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7d2308d1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009